

Proverbs 29:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length.

Analysis

He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child—The verb *fineq* (to bring up delicately, pamper, indulge) suggests excessive softness. Raising a na'ar (youth, child) in luxury without discipline produces unfortunate results: **shall have him become his son at the length**.

The Hebrew *manon* (son) at the end is textually difficult; some read it as 'grief' or 'ingratitude.' The wisdom warns against erasing proper boundaries through indulgence—the servant, treated as heir rather than subordinate, eventually claims status he hasn't earned. This applies beyond master-servant contexts to parenting: excessive permissiveness creates entitlement. Proverbs 29:15: 'The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.'

Historical Context

Ancient households sometimes saw servants rise to positions of trust and even adoption (Genesis 15:2-3, Eliezer). But wisdom warns that unearned elevation through pampering rather than proven character creates problems. Roman households similarly struggled with spoiled slaves who exploited masters' leniency.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Where might you be 'delicately bringing up' those you lead, avoiding necessary discipline?
2. How does appropriate boundary-setting differ from harshness in parenting or leadership?
3. What entitlement issues in your own life stem from being 'indulged' rather than trained in character?

Interlinear Text

הַמְּפִיץ קִי	מִן עַר	עַבְדּוֹ	אֶחָד וְ	יְהִי ה
He that delicately bringeth up	from a child	his servant	at the length	H1961
H6445	H5290	H5650	H319	
מְנִיחַ:				
shall have him become his son				
H4497				